**CFI News Insights**

**Armenia and Azerbaijan:**

***The unresolved status of Nagorna-Karabakh***

**Religious combatants with grievances**

In late September, former Soviet bloc satellites and regional state rivals largely based on religious differences, Armenia and Azerbaijan resumed military hostilities that had been dormant since their war in 1994. At the original dissolution of the Soviet Union, these 2 newly autonomous nations went to war over the area of Nagorna-Karabakh, which was and still is 95% ethnically Armenian, but was within the internationally acknowledged sovereign borders of Azerbaijan. Armenia was actually able to secure the portion of territory including Nagorna-Karabakh in the mid-90’s at the cost of 30,000 casualties combined on both sides. Since that time, though the international diplomatic community does not acknowledge it, Nagorna-Karabakh has operated as a semi-sovereign entity with Armenia acting as guarantor of its boundaries.

Recent developments in the Middle East, including the Caucasus Mountains have led some to speculate that Turkey helped to ignite the tensions between an Islamic republic on one side and an Orthodox Christian one on the other, much to the dismay of other world powers, including Russia and the E.U., who have already been trying to quell flashpoints in Libya and the east Mediterranean, Syria, and address the debacle that occurred in the Beirut port in Lebanon. According to a source at the Jerusalem Post, Turkey had begun mobilizing Syrian mercenary assistance for Azerbaijan to begin “liberating” Nagorna-Karabakh before any border skirmishes had been reported.

**Background and Roots**

Animosity between the Armenians and Azeris has been intractable since Czarist Russian rule in a dispute over the mountainous region of Nagorno-Karabakh, Stalin himself was partial to attach the region to Azerbaijan which became a source of deep resentment for the Armenians from the 1920’s until the post WW2 Soviet Union. As the empire came apart, a campaign was begun to achieve the peaceful unification of Armenia and Karabakh but Azerbaijan resisted the move as a threat to its territorial integrity, which soon escalated into a full-scale war. In the mid ‘90’s the so-called Minsk group was formed between the United States, France and Russia intending to facilitate a peaceful resolution, but left the situation untended diplomatically, as it seemed not be a high priority for any of these three, collectively or individually to deal with. Turkey seems to be looking to take this opportunity to help re-establish an Ottoman Empire model in this part of the world, as I alluded to in a previous Insights article concerning the conflict between Turkey and Greece (also Cyprus) in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. With a growing Islamist identity within Turkey, it has not been difficult to influence Azeri decision makers into re-engaging in a holy war with their Orthodox neighbours, Armenia. This conflict has the added oddity of Islamic Iran leaning toward the Christian Armenian position versus the Muslim Azeri position, because it seeks to make certain that ethnic Azeris within its own borders don’t have loyalties stirred beyond their Iranian citizenship. Also Israel, which is adamantly neutral in this conflict, has caught some diplomatic backlash because, the Israeli weaponry that the Azeris bought to utilize in the conflict seems to give them a qualitative advantage over the Armenians, which they obviously find unacceptable.

**Biblical Significance of the Caucasus Mountain location**

Beyond the Armenia-Azeri conflict having a basis in theological differences, there is actually another compelling interest for those of biblical faith regarding the attention of the world being drawn back to this geographic location. Noah’s Ark is said to have come to rest on Mount Ararat, which is where Turkey, Armenia and Iran come together (Genesis 8:4). With recent events in the Middle East, and within Israel in particular, the so-called Noahide laws have come into focus as a minimum requirement of all non-Jewish mankind to herald “a new era for humankind, a time when we will finally live together in peace and the world will be filled with divine wisdom. Those who keep these basic rules will have a share in that world, since, after all, they took part in making it possible.” The 7 laws are as follows:

**1. Do not profane G‑d’s Oneness in any way.**

**2. Do not curse your Creator.**

**3. Do not murder.**

**4. Do not eat a limb of a living animal.**

**5. Do not steal.**

**6. Harness and channel the human libido.**

**7. Establish courts of law and ensure justice in our world.**

Allegedly, anyone who keeps these basic rules for, regardless of race, nationality or cultur, is considered a righteous person and granted eternal life upon leaving this world. As noble as these laws are, (which will be adhered to if someone actually adhered to the Ten Commandments), have unfortunately become a “workaround” for Hasidic Orthodox Jews to recruit Gentile Believers in Yeshua to submit to their beliefs of how to worship God as a Gentile without faith in Yeshua.

We recognize that the Noahide consciousness is being raised at this time in history as all men sense an ultimate resolution to all matters in our lifetimes and while we accept Israel, Judaism and the Jewish nation *as is*, we maintain belief that as gentiles our relationship to the covenants of God and eternal life come through faith in the person of Yeshua/Jesus, the seed of Abraham and not through following the Noahide laws. Perhaps the military conflict in the Caucasus is indirectly shining a light on this issue in our time, as nations seek to clarify their relationship with Israel and as creation considers its appropriate status with reference to our Creator.

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